



Lessons Learned Dissemination Workshop

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE, BUILDING CAPACITY FOR RESPONSE



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VENUE: MIKLIN Hotel, Ashanti, Kumasi Region, Ghana

Organized by WANEP with Support from STAR-GHANA

1. INTRODUCTION

The West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), through its Civil Society Coordination and Democratic Governance (CSDG), Programme engages with key partners and relevant stakeholders to promote peaceful democratic transition and enhance democratic structures, institutions and practices at all levels. As part of its contribution to the promotion of peace and security in Ghana, especially during the 2012 presidential elections, WANEP under the platform of *'Transforming the Culture of Political Violence: Building Capacity for Response,'* project funded by Strengthening Transparency Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana) built the capacities of eminent persons drawn from the 10 regions of Ghana on managing election disputes and on election monitoring.

Following on this, WANEP in collaboration with STAR-Ghana organized a lessons learned workshop which brought together the earlier trained eminent persons and other key actors to share their experiences on the 2012 elections and proffer recommendations to guarantee peaceful environment in the upcoming 2016 elections. The eminent persons with the clout to mitigate on dialogue and mediation in their respective regions comprised Chiefs and Queen Mothers, representatives of Faith-Based Organizations and Civil Society. Also in attendance were other key actors including COP Rose Bio Atinga of the Ghana Police Service, George Amoh of the National Peace Council (NPC) and Georgina Opoku Amankwaa of the Electoral Commission of Ghana. The workshop took place on April 2, 2014 in Accra, Ghana and provided a platform for the participants to critically assess their roles before, during and after the 2012 election; recommend strategies to ensure team work, networking and collaboration in order to sustain peaceful co-existence in the coming elections.

WANEP Executive Director Mr. Emmanuel Bombande was represented by the Regional Coordinator Network Development, Mr. Alimou Diallo. In an opening remark, Mr. Diallo said; "WANEP believes that peacebuilding has to be locally grounded because what local people bring cannot be exchanged or replaced by foreign or 'expert' views." He recalled the progress made in 2012 but cautioned that "whilst we celebrate achievements, it is equally important to identify the missing gaps, determine how to fill the gaps because every election is a unique experience," and charged the participants to develop strategies towards ensuring that the 2016 elections can be made more peaceful.

Speaking in the same vein, COP Rose Bio Atinga, Director General Administration, Ghana Police Service said that elections are very critical in ensuring democracy and lamented that "today, people consider elections as a do or die affair." Georgina Amankwaa from the Electoral

Commission of Ghana commended the work of WANEP and its partners on ensuring peaceful elections in Ghana while George Amoh of the National Peace Council (NPC) also expressed solidarity with WANEP towards her efforts at promoting peace in the country, commending WANEP's role before, during and after the 2012 elections. He said it was the collective contribution of all stakeholders that helped to maintain peace during that period and pledged NPC's commitment to a more peaceful process in the next elections.

The forum was specifically to share experiences on actions taken by the stakeholders in the pre, and post electoral processes, brainstorm on the challenges and lessons learned and make recommendations on how those experiences will inform the preparations for the 2016 elections. Presentations were made on the project, 'Transforming the Culture of Political Violence: Building Capacity for Response,' goals and objectives. The presentation highlighted WANEP's interventions towards achieving project goals which included building capacity of local actors, production of relevant resources, voter education, and development of indicators to monitor the elections, media advocacy among others.

2. BACKGROUND

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP which was founded in 1998 in response to the civil wars that plagued the region in that decade is focused largely on making significant contributions to finding West African solutions to conflict and crisis situations in the region through collaborative approaches and working with diverse stakeholders to empower the people of West Africa to be able to solve their own problems.

The Civil Society Coordination and Democratic Governance Program provide an integrated platform for WANEP to promote peaceful democratic transitions, conflict resolution and enhance democratic structures and peacebuilding practices. Through this platform, WANEP partners with CSOs, government and inter-governmental organizations to monitor and mitigate election-related conflicts and promote dialogue and peaceful elections.

WANEP with the support of STAR-Ghana implemented a one-year project titled "Transforming the Culture of Political Violence: Building Capacity for Response," with the specific goal of strengthening capacity of key stakeholders in dialogue and mediation towards the prevention of political violence in the 2012 elections. The project is articulated around conflict transformation, dialogue, mediation and peace advocacy that strengthen platforms for the prevention of political violence and reduction in political intolerance during the 2012 elections and beyond. It is deeply rooted in WANEP's concept of building relationships for peace through collaborative approaches to conflict prevention and establishing platforms for dialogue, experience sharing and learning, thereby complementing efforts at ensuring sustainable peace and development in West Africa.

Key activities carried out towards actualizing the project goal included to establish regional mediation teams in all the ten regions of Ghana to mediate/mitigate conflicts during the electoral process, reduce political violence and intolerance and establish a monitoring mechanism for early warning towards peaceful elections. Through this project, WANEP built the capacity of eminent persons from the ten regions of Ghana in dialogue and mediation and further deployed them to monitor elections in their communities. Based on this training, the eminent persons were able to contribute immensely to conflict prevention in their communities and collaborated with other key stakeholders to establish platforms for dialogue and mediation using nonviolent strategies to build peace in potential flashpoints.

Other activities were the establishment of a monitoring mechanism using the WANEP highly developed Peace Monitoring Centre to generate and analyze information on the electoral process based on the development of 36 key indicators covering the entire process from campaign, to voting and post-election periods, the type of security issues and stakeholders to monitor in the election. WANEP also partnered with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to create a joint monitoring platform tagged the Joint Party Election Results Monitoring (J-PERM) with the sole objective of reducing tensions and anxiety usually associated with elections especially, in terms of disputed figures. Five political parties signed a memorandum of understanding endorsed by the Electoral Commission of Ghana, which defined their rules of engagement to be part of the J-PERM platform.

The Lessons Learned Forum became imperative as it provided opportunity for all the stakeholders who participated in the implementation of the project to share their experiences, built on lessons learnt and recommend the necessary strategies for improvement.


3. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

3.1. Analyses of Stakeholders Role

This session was focused on the roles the different stakeholders played in the run up to the 2012 including challenges and recommendations for improvement (*Please see Annex 1 for the table*)

4. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Key Achievements

-  There is collective responsibility to avoid electoral conflict by the parties, and capacity has been increased for conflict prevention.

- ✚ No casualties were recorded during the elections and parties used legal means to contest election results which was integral in the protocol of commitment.
- ✚ The WANEP National Early Warning System in Ghana (GHANAWARN) has received tremendous funding support from donors as a result of this.
- ✚ Through the eminent persons, communities are now involved in conflict monitoring and in early intervention.

4.2. Challenges

- Increasing levels of political intolerance as a result of unending struggles and fierce contest for the control of power and political space.
- Verbal attacks and threats of war by rival political parties.
- Unresolved chieftaincy disputes with political undertones.

4.3. Lessons Learned

- National Infrastructures for Peace are vital to peacebuilding and the culture of conflict prevention.
- The effective role of the security agencies is critical in maintaining the Authority of the State and securing the electoral process.
- The media is a double edged sword: they can contribute to peaceful elections or fan flames of electoral violence.
- Building local capacities is essential to sustaining peace and cannot be replaced by any foreign expertise.
- Given the opportunity, all political parties have the tendency to cheat. Therefore the relevant bodies should exercise vigilance guided by regulations.
- External intervention often times lead to escalation of conflicts. Countries should learn to solve their problems themselves through strengthening local capacities.
- Ghana's peace must not be seen as Ghana's only but for the whole of Africa because what happens in one country can affect another either positively or negatively.
- Involvement of women and youth in the regional and national peace councils is key to achieving holistic peaceful co-existence.
- High alertness of security agencies accounted for peaceful election in 2012, hence Government of Ghana having recognized their efforts, should prepare in advance to keep the spirit of service among them very high.
- Dialogue and mediation are powerful tools in peace building so all WANEP partners across the 10 regions should be supported to benefit from training packages that WANEP organizes in Ghana and beyond.

- Reducing the disparity in development opportunities between the north and the south helps to douse political tension
- Conflict prevention ventures should be given priority by donor or funding agencies by allocating greater resources towards prevention rather than reaction.

4.4. Recommendations

The Eminent Persons Group

- Members should engage in raising funds through proposals to credible agencies as lack of funds is crippling the work of the eminent persons.
- In order to sustain the tempo and ensure team work, the National Peace Council, NPC should be part of future meetings and trainings while contact information of team members should be made available to the Police Service and the Electoral commission to enhance dialogue and cooperation among them.
- Traditional leaders (Chiefs and Queen mothers) should learn to emulate the example of Otumfou Nana Osei Tutu of Ashanti Kingdom by adding their voices for peace among their constituents ahead of the 2016 elections.

Election Commission of Ghana (ECG)

- Security services are critical in a context where people consider elections as a do or die affair hence the EC should include the security in all the election phases starting from voter registration.
- Faulty biometric machines negatively affected the voting process during the last elections so the EC should work hard to fulfill its plan to have two Biometric Verification Devices, BVDS at all the projected 35,000 polling stations.
- EC should provide adequate training for their volunteers and staffs early on before the commencement of the electoral process.
- EC should review the voter's register to ensure it is updated to avoid missing names of voters prior to voting time.
- EC should work with political parties to ensure that the aged and persons with disabilities do not queue up for long hours to cast their votes.
- EC should endeavor to procure quality-voting materials on time and value for money should be of prime importance when procuring election materials.
- EC should update the election hot spots across Ghana, make it public and engage political parties to intensify voter education so voters are conversant with electoral laws and also to avoid intimidation of voters by rival party agents.

National Peace Council (NPC)

- Peace Councils at all levels should be supported by both public and private funding agencies to perform their duties effectively.
- Neutrality of NPC should be maintained at all times.
- Need to engage with more actors at the national, regional and district levels.

Security Agencies

- The security agencies should be resourced adequately to strengthen and expand the use of the four-tier hardcore and soft approaches in deploying and engaging potential trouble causers and criminals.
- Security forces should be motivated appropriately to maintain their professionalism and should display neutrality in dealing with political parties.
- Security of ballot boxes should always be given prime attention before, during and after voting.
- The security operatives must rely and work with communities to achieve success since most of the criminals are residing in the communities.

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

- WANEP should help to create online platforms for eminent members to access relevant information both for peacebuilding initiatives and sources of funding.
- WANEP should extend scholarships to interested members of the eminent group to attend the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) and any other relevant peacebuilding trainings.

5. CLOSING COURTESIES

Bringing the meeting to a close, Mr. Alimou Diallo on behalf of WANEP commended the participants for their enthusiasm and active participation while appreciating the presence of COP Rose Bio Atinga and George Amoh for their support and commitment to ensuring peaceful elections in 2012 which will be sustained in the 2016 elections. The mood of some of the participants is captured below;

“Today’s discussions will guide us in our future work. WANEP is a blessing to all. I learnt a lot from the Police representative. New things have happened. I will work to make the EC visible at all times. I want to be an active member of this group” **Georgina Opoku Amankwaa, Electoral Commission**

“This meeting has been an important platform. It has increased our relationship and commitments to deepen our team work towards conflict prevention and peace building. I will ensure that NPC is well linked with stakeholders here.” **George Amoh, National Peace Council**

“...This is about one of the best learning I have experienced. Before regional teams can be more proactive there is need to get at least one person each to be trained at WAPI.” **Representative of Traditional leaders**

5.1. ACTION POINTS/WAY FORWARD

- Electoral Commission plans to engage Inter-Party Advisory Committee, IPAC regularly.
- Polling stations will increase from 26,000 to 35,000.
- BVDs to increase from 1 to 2 in every polling station.
- The law on “No Verification, No Vote” is undergoing consultation although there is opposition from the political parties.
- Limited registration to commence in June for youth who are now 18 years old and who were not registered in the last elections.

ANNEX 1: STAKEHOLDERS ROLE AND CONTRIBUTIONS

STAKEHOLDERS	ROLES/ACTION	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of voters • Recruitment and training of temporary staff • Demarcation of boundaries of constituencies • Procurement and distribution of election materials • Monitoring and supervision • Counting and declaration of results at polling stations • Collation and transmission of results • Debriefing exercise • Registration and printing of ballot papers • Final declaration within legal timeframe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of new constituencies were suspicious • High temperatures disenfranchised some voters such as pregnant women • Inadequate training for temporal staff. • Lack of funds to support security work • Breakdown of BVDs due to poor quality • Some laws such as place of residence discouraged voters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to have adequately trained staff to manage the polls • Need to Increase the number of BVDs per polling station, and to review 'no verification no voting (NVNV) • Include security operatives in all phases, especially during registration.
GHANA POLICE SERVICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided security during registration and on the election day • Trained personnel and special groups • Distribution of election materials and creation of joint security task force and committees • Operated Joint operational Centre equipped with gadgets • Engaged with all stakeholders, chiefs, imams, FBOS, Peace Councils, machomen, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear rule on whether to vote in residences and or work places • Main road can be a threat – water bodies can be poisoned. • “No matter how many Police you have you cannot stop a rebellion” COP Rose Bio Atinga. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens cooperation is important to succeed • Early planning was good • Use of soft approach to engage with potential trouble causers was excellent • Use of modern policing equipment boosted public confidence • Use of Prisons and Fire service personnel and creation of special constable was good • Involvement of print and electronic media • Early analysis of threats and flashpoints • Neutrality of security

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> okada associations Held peace marches 		forces
NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitored the elections Created the platform to deal with conflict Mediation between political parties and the Electoral Commission made it possible for the results to be announced on time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to link NPC to political parties to undermine its neutrality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutrality of NPC should be maintained at all times Need to engage with more actors at the national, regional and district levels.
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitored and reported threats to the electoral process Mapping of political parties Worked with youth groups to form Interparty Youth Dialogue Committee Screening of violent videos (cry freedom) at hotspots Sensitization of Youth Groups and other Stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate funding High demand for money at the community level Inactive police hot lines especially the 15555 Late arrival of EC materials Hostility of some EC staff towards voters. Intimidation of voters by party agents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of key political party youth groups is an innovative way of promoting peace High alertness of security agencies accounted for peaceful election.
EMINENT PERSONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered peace messages during meetings and other public events Carried out peace campaigns and distributed IEC materials Undertook advocacy and sensitization targeting political leaders, youths, women groups, security agencies among others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of funds Negative media reports especially by some radio houses Inadequate training of polling staff by the EC No proper provision for the aged and persons with disability The “No Verification No Vote” law created lots of problems as the machines rejected cardholders. Inadequate education of voters Poor quality of voting materials and late arrival of election materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better motivational packages for volunteers Dialogue and mediation are powerful tools in peace building Teamwork among the various stakeholders helps to curtail violence Voter education necessary The use of the biometric machine helped to avoid double voting which was common in previous elections. Security of ballot boxes should be given prime attention before, during and after voting.